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20 Oct 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Urgent Need for a New Building for the National  
Photographic Interpretation Center

1. This memorandum contains a recommendation for your approval; such recommendation is contained in paragraph 6.
2. Approval of the OSP/DDS&T/RTRO program with RTRO funding and the announced time schedule for construction, equipment completion, and operational readiness by early 1975 calls for immediate action to bring the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) into phase. Together the Office of Special Projects (OSP) and NPIC activities will provide an integrated system for quickly seeking out and transmitting target observations on command, opportunely identifying priority targets, and then exploiting the results of the directed action with commensurate speed employing immediate and continuous photo interpretation.
3. The speed and reliability of both coverage responses and dissemination of images, as well as the effectiveness of our decisions about them will be highly dependent on close and timely communications among the Agency officers responsible for managing the components of the system and the supporting services. A specialized team of photo interpreters placed close - in time and space - to the point of image production and to those who task the system can best accomplish this aspect of the Agency's mission of collection, analysis and production of intelligence information. The mechanics of sustaining such an essential affinity would be considerably strengthened by locating the OSP processing and operations facility and NPIC at Agency Headquarters.
4. Quite apart from that interface, NPIC requires a new building for maximum efficiency and to facilitate a smooth functioning intelligence system, with a "quick look" exploitation capability around the clock. Such a building would also support the personnel, equipment and data providing the in-depth expertise and organization for carrying through with follow-up and detailed photo analysis work emanating from the OSP systems. The building which presently houses NPIC is inadequate, and the necessary structural changes are extremely costly. By the end of Fiscal Year 1972 one of the buildings used by NPIC is to be torn down and within a few more years buildings  will be confined on three sides by

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25X1 [redacted] all within a few yards of the buildings. Experience has demonstrated that attempting to reconfigure an existing structure for NPIC's sensitive, delicate, and technical operation would be a great expense, and even then would result in a far less functional building than one designed to meet the NPIC requirements. Faced with this problem as well as the need for the described interfacing, construction is considered necessary.

5. Numerous other poignant reasons exist for constructing a building now and for placing it adjacent to the RTRO Processing and Control Center.

25X1 a. [redacted] is an Antiquated Shell - The building is outmoded; it permits only a random gathering of activities and equipment and does not facilitate the operation and systems which it houses. A new structure would evolve through a systems approach embodying advanced techniques for displaying collateral material, and incorporating multisensor information inputs. The key would be the photo interpreter work station with the design including photo interpretation cells and modular support components for display, mensuration and collateral retrieval.

25X1 b. Advancing State-of-the-art - Continued modification of [redacted] will be very expensive with no assurance of success in meeting the following requirements: vibration-free base for the advanced mensuration tools; heavy duty cooling and power support for new electronic devices; extra shielding for exaggerated electromagnetic emissions; special lighting for viewing color imagery; advanced pollution control, especially for on-coming processing devices which produce abnormal heat as well as toxic gases; ultra-clean room requirements for anticipated image enhancement equipment.

c. Vibration - Excessive vibrations in [redacted] negatively affect sensitive high magnification equipment. The light table vibration limit is now exceeded in some areas of the building and is close to intolerable in others. Compensation can be configured in certain fixed equipment by mounting it on special bases at very high cost. There is no economically feasible method of adequately counteracting the vibration in other areas. R&D efforts are producing more capable and sophisticated equipment where the vibration factor will become even more critical. Heavy trucks and trains now move close to the building.

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d. Impact of Metro Subway System - Construction of the Metro Tube in 1974 through 1976 will be within [ ] De-watering operations in the subsoil, essential to construction of the tunnel, could result in a settling of the building. Also, a potentially excessive vibration condition could be created which would adversely affect sensitive equipment.

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e. Standby Emergency Power - Brownouts in the Metropolitan area are expected to continue for the next several years, and blackouts are a real possibility. [ ] has been forced to discontinue elevator service, reduce air conditioning, etc., during brownouts; it would be inoperable during blackouts. Standby power can be provided for approximately [ ] However, if the NPIC operation is relocated to the Headquarters Langley site, some power for emergency requirements could be made available from existing supplemental power at Headquarters, if operational priority required. However, at least some augmentation of Headquarters emergency power would be necessary.

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f. Communications - An appreciable savings in leased line costs would be realized if NPIC moves to a building on the Headquarters Langley site. Such a move would result in an approximate reduction per annum of [ ] because service at the new location would be primarily internal, within the Headquarters complex.

g. Parking and Neighborhood - [ ] NPIC employees must park on the streets of [ ] This is a deprived area and there are frequent acts of automobile vandalism. Further, employees are frequently accosted while walking between their automobiles and the building, even during daylight hours. Any employee required to work after hours is instructed to bring his automobile into the main compound at 4:15 p.m.

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h. Security - Securing [ ] from civil disorder, safeguarding highly classified material, and providing NPIC employees a measure of protection in a high crime rate area requires a substantial expenditure of human and fiscal assets. Security now requiring manpower can be engineered into a new building located within a controlled environment with a corresponding reduction of annual costs. Not being able to use women on night shifts would highly complicate the projected three-shift program.

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6. It is recommended that the Agency take immediate steps to acquire the necessary funds and approval to construct a new building to house the National Photographic Interpretation Center collocating it with the OSP Processing Center adjacent to the Agency Headquarters.

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CONCURRENCE:

R. J. Smith  
Deputy Director for Intelligence

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The recommendation contained in paragraph 6 is approved.

Richard Helms  
Director of Central Intelligence

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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